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ABSTRACT

Investigated was the relationship between the perceived school adjustment of 215 female and 202 male fourth grade pupils and their classroom teachers' ratings in this area. Examined were the extent of teacher/pupil agreement relative to perceived learning and/or adjustment problems and the relationship between teacher referral or pupil self referral to sex of the child and type of problem indicated. A significant relationship was found between teacher referral and pupil self referral. However, a disproportionate number of male students were referred by their teachers (38% to 12%), and a much higher percentage of females (33%) referred themselves. Results suggested the need to include a pupil self referral component within the screening mechanism for the identification of children in need of special education services. (Author/DB)

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A Comparison of Teacher Referral and
Pupil Self-Referral Measures Relative
to Perceived School Adjustment

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to Perceived School Adjustment¹

Due primarily to the passage of mandatory education legislation for handicapped children, considerable emphasis has been placed recently upon the area of "screening" by local school districts throughout the country (Davis, 1974; Hammill, 1971; Harth & Galvin, 1971; Jones, 1972; Keogh & Becker, 1973; Mann, 1974; Spivack and Swift, 1973).

In most states it is the responsibility of the local school system to develop a comprehensive screening mechanism designed to identify those handicapped children in need of special education services. Yet the literature reveals a good deal of confusion relative to not only the development and implementation of a screening model per se, but also to the input variables which should be considered in the screening process (Davis, 1974).

Typically the major components of the screening process consist of informal teacher referral and standardized teacher rating forms. Few studies have reported the utilization of a pupil self-referral measure as an integral component of the screening operation. Likewise the literature yields very limited information pertaining to the comparison between teacher ratings of children and the child's own perceptions relative to his level of school adjustment. Adhering to a child advocacy position, it seems reasonable to raise the issue as to why more screening models do not include the child himself in such processes if, in fact, it is the child himself who is presented as the end product of all such screening activities. Should not the children themselves be allowed to have some input into their own screening process?

¹This study was presented by the author at the Council for Exceptional Children 54th Annual Convention, Chicago, Illinois, April 7, 1976.

PURPOSE

The basic purpose of the study was designed to investigate the relationship between teacher referral and pupil self-referral relative to perceived school adjustment and focused on two major questions: (1) To what extent do teachers and pupils agree relative to perceived learning and/or adjustment problems in the classroom? and (2) What are the relationships between teacher referral and pupil self-referral relative to sex of the child and type of problem indicated?

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were (1) 417 fourth grade students (215 females and 202 males) attending 15 regular public school classes throughout the state of Maine and (2) their 15 classroom teachers (12 female and 3 male). The classroom teachers and students were randomly selected from school systems throughout the state.

Procedure

Training sessions were held with each teacher prior to the study in order to explain the purpose of the investigation to explain and the administration of the two instruments to be employed: (1) the Teacher Referral Form and (2) The Pupil Self-Referral Scale (Form B). Both measures are components of the Maine Screening Inventory (M.S.I.) (Davis, 1974).

The Teacher Referral Form is designed to allow a classroom teacher to refer children who he feels present the most serious learning and/or adjustment problems within the classroom. The teacher is asked to rank the students in order of the severity of the problem or problems as he views them and to concisely indicate the nature of the problem. In addition, the teacher is asked to list the strengths for each child referred. It was recommended that teachers, in their referral process, consider the lowest one-fourth of the class as a reference group, and particular emphasis was placed on pupil situational functioning at that time.

The use of categorical labels was discouraged.

The Pupil Self-Referral Scale (Form B) contains ten questions which relate directly to the student's perception of his adjustment to various aspects of school (e.g. "I feel that I can read well," "I feel that I get along well with most of my classmates," etc.). A weighted scoring procedure is employed which is designed to identify those children who perceive themselves as having the "most serious" problems.

Both the Teacher Referral Form and the Pupil Self-Referral Forms were administered during the same two week period approximately five months into the school year.

RESULTS

Table 1 illustrates a fourfold contingency table showing the relationship between teacher nomination and pupil self-nomination.

Insert Table 1 about here

A chi square was calculated on the total group (N=417). A chi square of 79.2 (df=1) was obtained which is significant at the $< .001$ level. The results suggest a significant relationship exists between teacher referral and pupil self-referral measures ($p < .001$).

The relationship between teacher and pupil self-referral was also studied for each of the 15 classes. These results are reported in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Thus a significant relationship ($p < .05$ or better) was found to exist between the variables of teacher referral and pupil self-referral in seven of the classes.

Considerable descriptive data were also obtained from the investigation and are reported as follows:

- (1) Seventy pupils who were referred by teachers also referred themselves while 251 pupils who were not referred by teachers also did not refer themselves.
- (2) Thirty-four pupils who were not referred by teachers referred themselves while 62 pupils referred themselves who were not nominated by their teachers.
- (3) Teachers referred 78 males or 38% of the total male sample.
- (4) Teachers referred 26 females or 12% of the total female population.
- (5) Relative to Pupil Self-Referral, 67 or 33% of the total female population referred themselves while 69 or 38% of the males referred themselves.
- (6) All students ranked by teachers as #1 in terms of learning and/or adjustment problems were males.
- (7) Of the total number of students ranked by teachers as either #1, #2 or #3, -- 42 or 93% were males (3 females were referred).
- (8) Nine of the 15 males ranked as #1 were referred for behavioral problems.
- (9) Twenty-five of the 26 females referred by teachers were for academic problems.
- (10) Of the pupils referred by teachers ranked as either #1 or #2, 90% also referred themselves.

DISCUSSION

Based upon an analysis of the results of this investigation it would appear that pupils have good ability to recognize their problems of adjustment within

the classroom setting and to refer themselves. This would seem to suggest that greater utilization of pupil self-referral input within local school system screening mechanisms would have merit.

The results of the study appear to be consistent with much of the literature which indicates that males, especially males perceived as manifesting behavioral difficulties, are viewed as the major problems by their teachers, while females are relatively ignored in the referral process.

Since a much higher percentage of females in the study referred themselves (33%) as compared to teacher nomination of female students (12%), this would seem to suggest the need for teachers to develop a greater awareness and sensitivity toward the perceived adjustment problem of their female students. Otherwise it is conceivable that many female students may be inappropriately "missed" in a school system's screening process.

Caution should be exercised in generalizing the results of this investigation to broader populations. The study was limited to fifteen classes, all at the fourth grade level. Also the instrumentation employed has not as yet been standardized. However, the significance of the results obtained appear to warrant the need for further research in this area.

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TABLE I
Fourfold Contingency Table

		Pupil Self-Referral		
		YES	NO	
Teacher Referral	NO	62	251	313
	YES	70	34	104
		132	285	

$N=417$
 $\chi^2=79.2 = *p < .001$
 $df=1$

Chi Square (χ^2) Values for Each Class

<u>Class</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>χ^2</u>	<u>p*</u>
A	27	.68	<.50
B	32	5.8	<.02*
C	26	5.0	<.05*
D	23	10.0	<.01*
E	27	3.0	<.10
F	30	2.6	<.20
G	26	5.2	<.05*
H	27	1.7	<.20
I	30	2.6	<.20
J	31	5.2	<.05*
K	22	2.7	<.20
L	29	5.4	<.02*
M	30	2.6	<.20
N	28	.44	<.70
O	29	6.2	<.02*

df=1

*p <.05 or better